

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 265908

NODIS

FOR DR BRZEZINSKI

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM MANILA DTD 07 NOV 1977 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 17635

NODIS

FOR HOLBROOKE FROM AMBASSADOR NEWSOM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, RP

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: CASE OF BENIGNO AQUINO

REF: STATE 264718

1. AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN GIVING THOUGHT TO WHAT I CAN
USEFULLY DO IN AQUINO CASE. HAMBURG AND PAUKER INTERESTS
OBVIOUSLY REPRESENT NEW DEVELOPMENTS WORTH FOLLOWING.

2. I WILL OF COURSE BE HAPPY TO SEE HAMBURG WHEN HE COMES
TO MANILA. WHILE I AM STILL FEELING MY WAY, I WOULD PREFER
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NOT MAKE ADVANCE COMMITMENT TO HAMBURG TO ASSIST IN
ARRANGING INTERVIEWS WITH AQUINO AND GOP OFFICIALS. HE MAY
WELL BE ABLE TO MAKE THESE ARRANGEMENTS DIRECTLY AS HAVE
OTHER VISITORS ON SIMILAR MISSIONS SUCH AS WILLIAM BUTLER
OF THE ICJ. SHOULD HE RUN INTO DIFFICULTIES, WE COULD
CONSIDER USING OUR GOOD OFFICES.

3. I AGREE WITH YOUR JUDGMENT THAT AQUINO'S PEACEFUL DEPARTURE TO THE U.S. WOULD BENEFIT THE SITUATION, AND THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK FOR THIS. GIVEN THE GOP'S AND OUR CURRENT PREOCCUPATION WITH SECURITY ISSUES, MY OWN RECENT ARRIVAL, AND IN VIEW OF THE PRELIMINARY STATE OF HAMBURG'S INQUIRY, MY INSTINCT IS TO LET THE AQUINO MATTER MATURE A BIT BEFORE I CONSIDER RAISING THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT.

4. AS THE EMBASSY SEES IT HERE, THE KEY ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE THE TERMS UNDER WHICH MARCOS WOULD AGREE TO RELEASE AQUINO AND AQUINO WOULD AGREE TO GO INTO EXILE. IN THE PAST, A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION HAS BEEN STYMIED BY THE GOP'S INSISTENCE THAT AQUINO CONFESS GUILT. WE DOUBT THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY CHANGE IN AQUINO'S ADAMANT REFUSAL TO ADMIT CULPABILITY.

5. REPORTS (REFTEL) THAT AQUINO IS NOW PREPARED TO DEPART IF HIS RELEASE CAN BE ARRANGED MAY BE CORRECT. IN A DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFFS OCTOBER 28 SENATOR SALONGA (AQUINO'S LAWYER) EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT, IF MARCOS WERE TO OFFER EXILE, AQUINO'S FAMILY WOULD FORCE HIM TO ACCEPT. WE INTERPRET THIS AS A CAUTIOUS SIGNAL THAT AQUINO MAY BE PREPARED TO TRADE RELEASE FOR EXILE. BUT IF MARCOS SHOULD SET THE PRICE TOO HIGH (E.G., AN ADMISSION OF GUILT), AQUINO MAY WELL REFUSE THE DEAL.
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6. IN SUMMARY, A VIABLE SCENARIO WOULD SEEM TO BE A STRAIGHT RELEASE FOR EXILE ARRANGEMENT, WITH NO FURTHER CONDITIONS. (OUR RECORD OF NOT HAVING LIONIZED LOPEZ, OSMENA OR MANG LAPUS SHOULD PROVE USEFUL.) BUT WE NEED A MORE CLEAR AND CURRENT READING OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF EACH SIDE. IN THIS REGARD, EMBASSY OFFICERS WILL PLAN TO MAKE FURTHER QUIET SOUNDINGS WITH AQUINO'S FAMILY AND ASSOCIATES TO GAIN A MORE PRECISE IDEA OF AQUINO'S PRESENT THINKING.
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